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New CIA Choice Alarms Intelligence Pros

Intelligence professionals have been stunned by the latest proposed high-level CIA appointment: Dan Childs, the chief budget examiner of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Childs is soon expected to be named CIA Comptroller where he will have a major impact on how the agency spends its money.

What especially concerns these professionals about Childs is that he is considered a protege of William Miller, who, with major assists from the Institute for Policy Studies and the ACLU, created the Church Committee which proceeded to dismantle U.S. intelligence capabilities. Miller was staff director of the committee during the dismantling process.

When the Church panel evolved into the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, with Miller still serving as staff director, Childs came aboard to help Miller shift much of the CIA's resources from human intelligence collection and covert action to expensive technical collection gear. Though the CIA needed a careful mixture of both kinds of intelligence gathering techniques, the effect of the Miller-Childs policy was to drastically inhibit the agency's human intelligence collection capacity and its covert operational capabilities. It is an intelligence truism that technical collection can only tell you what the enemy has, while, through the human collection of intelligence, you can learn what the enemy plans to do with what he has.

Miller was awarded a medal by the Carter Administration in its closing hours for his support of the purging of the CIA's clandestine operatives. Now, the Reagan Administration, which came into power promising to restore our intelligence capabilities, is interested in promoting one of the key players who helped destroy those capabilities.

Intelligence officers, who were cheered by the appointment of an experienced intelligence professional, John McMahon, as the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, believe that the Childs selection is another piece of evidence that CIA chief William Casey still does not wholly control his agency. Too much reliance, they say, is placed on people like Childs, with many more like him waiting in the wings to fill important CIA slots.